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ABSTRACT

The Education for Careers/Professions (ECP) team at Centennial High School (Champaign, Illinois) is embarking on a plan for the future education of the workforce. Its vision statement and plan are designed to prepare all 1,500 students for life beyond high school into the world of work in the 21st century. The ECP plan addresses the need for students to attain high levels of technological skills and related academic competencies. It provides connections between the classroom and the real world and prepares students for at least 2 years of college training or apprenticeship beyond high school. The ECP plan consists of three components: school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities. The plan is implemented through the following methods: freshman participation in career-oriented field trips, extensive career counseling, and development of an individual career pathway; sophomore job shadowing; junior mentoring opportunities; and senior mentoring and/or internships/apprenticeships. Students choose among six career pathways: health, human service, business/communications, fine arts, agriculture/natural resources, and engineering/manufacturing. Career pathways emphasize focus on a career goal yet allow flexibility so students can change pathways. After successful completion of an ECP pathway, students receive a certificate of achievement. An additional component of the ECP plan is a coordinator housed with the Champaign-Urbana Chamber of Commerce who sets up all student work experiences. (YLB)

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Education to Careers and Professions

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Chronobiologist, hypertext abstractor, and cybrarian--terms out of the latest science fiction thriller? No! These are expected careers for the 21st century, just a very few short years away.

Let's start out with a 3 question quiz. 1) At the turn of the 20th century 85% of US workers were in agriculture. Today how many are? (3% of workforce)
Let's try another. 2) In 1950 73% of all employees worked in production or manufacturing. In 1996, how many were there? (less 15%)
3) By the year 2000 the Department of Labor estimates that 44% of all workers will be in what field? (service)

During the early 1900's, 85% of our workers were in agriculture. Now agriculture involves less than 3% of the workforce. In 1950, 73% of U. S. employees worked in production or manufacturing. Now less than 15% do. The Department of Labor estimates that by the year 2000 at least 44% of all workers will be in data services; for example, gathering, processing, retrieving, or analyzing information. Careers come and go. Jobs change. This is nothing new--it's just happening far faster than ever before.

Whether in the NASSP's latest report, Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution or Goals 2000 or any other report or exposé parents, students, and the business community are clamoring for solid citizens who will be productive members of the workplace as we approach the 21st century.
In Breaking Ranks, recommendation #2 states:

> High schools must function as a transitional experience, getting each student ready for the next stage of life, whatever that may be for that individual, with the understanding that, ultimately, each person needs to earn a living.

Goal #3 in Goals 2000 ends with:

> ". . . all students [should] learn to use their minds well, so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our nation's modern economy."

What happens to students in Illinois? Of 100 ninth graders entering high schools in Illinois 26 drop out before graduation. Of 74 who graduate 38 go on to further training in a community college, technical school, or university; ten marry or join the military; 26 go directly into the work force. Only 18 of the original 74 high school graduates earn a bachelor's degree or above. For yet another perspective a look at some different statistics at the national level is significant. For the population over 25, 2.3% earn a doctorate degree or do post-doctoral work; 5.1 % earn a master's degree; 14.7% earn a bachelor's degree; 7% have an associate's degree; 17.4% have some college credit; 34.4% are high school graduates; 19.1% do not graduate from high school. Truly the distinction between white and blue collar work in a technology rich world is becoming blurred. In many new factories, jobs are "white smock" whereby workers are responsible for computer controlled equipment and quality control.

Only 1 in 4 workers holds a bachelor's degree or above. Most competitive jobs today do require some postsecondary education but the majority of well pay positions do not require a bachelor's degree.

Some in business and industry have told educators that we are not preparing students for the real world. The popular media herald that American students can't read, can't figure, can't write, can't think, and can't work together cooperatively.

At Centennial High School the Education for Careers/Professions team in particular is embarking on a plan for the future education of the work force that our school directly impacts. A group of 13 teachers met in the summer of 1995 for one

week and developed a vision statement and outlined a plan to prepare all of Centennial's 1500 students for life beyond Centennial High School into the world of work in the 21st century. We are seriously considering the role that public schools have in preparing students for a career, a profession. The Education for Careers/Professions plan addresses the need for students to attain high levels of technological skills and related academic competencies. In part the vision statement reads: "The ECP plan works cooperatively with business, industry, companies, and agencies to help us combine educational goals with career goals to prepare students for post secondary training, education and eventual careers and professions."

The ECP Plan provides connections between the classroom and the real world. This program will help prepare students for at least two years of college training or apprenticeship beyond high school and many will pursue a four-year degree. The ECP plan consists of the following three components: school-based learning, work-based learning, and connecting activities.

Let me stress we are targeting not any one segment of the high school population but all students. Begun with the Class of 2000, students receive career counseling and guidance toward a career pathway. Each freshman develops an individual career plan pathway.

Succinctly, there are four major components:

1. The freshman year students participate in career oriented field trips and receive extensive career counseling with an introduction to the six career pathways in a conference with the student and parent as well as developing an ICP.

2. The sophomore year is punctuated with job shadowing and more career counseling, choosing a career pathway.

3. The junior year students take part in mentoring opportunities.

4. And the senior year, students participate in mentoring and/or internships/apprenticeships.

What are Career Pathways? Career pathways as developed at Centennial are health, human service, business/communications, fine arts, agriculture/natural resources, and lastly engineering/manufacturing. These were developed specifically for Centennial and differ slightly from the six career pathways developed by the state of Illinois.

Career pathways are continuing programs of study for careers from entry-level to those requiring baccalaureate degrees and beyond. Career pathways emphasize preparing every student to focus on a career goal as they proceed through a curriculum. There is a flexibility so that students can change pathways at any time as they are involved in the ECP program and as they mature. Every department in the school is included in the six career pathways as we expand, integrate, and alter curriculum.

After successfully completing the ECP pathway, each student will receive a certificate of achievement. The student will earn high school credit for fulfilling the criteria and extra work that is entailed in the program. One goal is to arrange for the Education Career Path student to be eligible for scholarship points and course credit for his/her achievements. Besides these obvious rewards from the program, the students will also have acquired valuable work contacts and skills in their career pathway.

The success of our students and this program is dependent on several factors that go beyond the four walls of the physical school. In order for this program to

really prepare our students for a world beyond senior year, we must work cooperatively with our community, our parents, our business partners, the job market.

The last component of the ECP Plan is a coordinator. The coordinator is housed, not at Centennial High School but with the Champaign-Urbana Chamber of Commerce. This individual is responsible for setting up all of the experiences for our students: organizing field trips to businesses, locating job shadowing experiences, securing mentors for our students, providing guest speakers for classes, and developing brochures for students and business community. Obviously, this individual works closely with the Chamber of Commerce as partnerships are established between Centennial High School and the world of work.

A significant component to the success of the program is the commitment of the staff. As a result, a focus has been placed on staff development in order that teachers travel nationally, in the region, and at the local level. Conferences that emphasize best practices and visits to other schools are encouraged. Consequently, curriculum schoolwide is being revised.

Has Centennial High School discovered and implemented a revolutionary concept in education? The answer is no. However, we will ensure that Centennial students are better prepared for career choices and are productive citizens in any community in the 21st century. That is our vision; that is our goal and we are determined to meet it.